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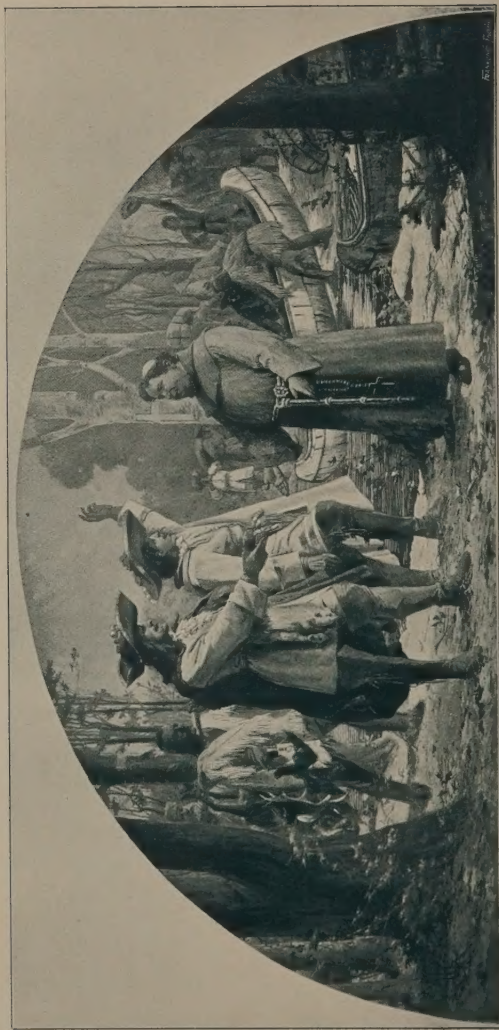
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Historical painting from the studio of H. F. Huber & Co., New York. Arthur Thomas, artist.

LA SALLE AT THE PORTAGE LANDING, ST. JOSEPH RIVER, DECEMBER 5, 1679.

LA SALLE

IN THE

VALLEY OF THE ST. JOSEPH.

AN HISTORICAL FRAGMENT.

BY

CHARLES H. BARTLETT,

PRESIDENT NORTHERN INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

AND

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE.



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Descriptive.

When the plans for the construction of the St. Joseph County, Indiana, court house, built in the city of South Bend in 1897-98, were completed, it was found that no provision had been made for the decoration of two large lunettes under the big dome, and over the entrances to the court rooms, on the second floor rotunda. It was suggested by the authors of this "Fragment" that these spaces, each sixteen feet by eight feet in size, be utilized to commemorate events connected with the county's early history, and the suggestion met the hearty approval of the County Commissioners, who included in the contract for the decoration of the interior of the building, the painting of two historical scenes, the details of which were to be furnished the artists by the writers hereof.

The two most important events connected with the life of the intrepid French explorer, LaSalle, in his visits to this region 220 years ago, were selected, and from this beginning have developed the magnificent paintings, "LaSalle at the Portage, December 5, 1679,"

and "LaSalle at the Miami Treaty, May, 1681." A half-tone reproduction of the first named forms the frontispiece of this work and one of the latter the center-piece.

The time of the former is about sunset at the old portage landing, two miles below the city of South Bend, on the St. Joseph river, and shows the reunion of the explorer's party after LaSalle's return from nearly two days' wandering in the wilderness hereabouts. The central figures are LaSalle, his devoted lieutenant, Tonty, Father Hennepin, the Franciscan Friar, and the sturdy Mohican hunter.

In the second picture, LaSalle is represented at his famous treaty with the Miami Indians on Portage Prairie, two miles west of South Bend, the explorer and the head chief of the tribe in the foreground, both in the court dress appropriate for state occasions of this kind. The time of the day is about 10 o'clock in the forenoon.

The gathering of the details for these paintings has been an interesting though laborious and not a little expensive task. The best of authorities of ancient and modern times have been consulted, and the form, features and costuming of all the figures represented may be relied upon as historically correct, while the grouping and coloring displays the genius of the true artist. The paintings were executed in the studio of H. F. Huber & Co., New York, by Mr.

Arthur Thomas, an artist who has made historical subjects a life study, and who has given his best skill to these works: The paintings meet the full approval of the architects of the court house, Messrs. Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, of Boston, Mass.; of the Board of County Commissioners, Messrs. Samuel Bowman, Peter H. Reaves and John D. Fulmer, and their legal adviser, Hon. A. L. Brick; of the Advisory Committee, Messrs. Clem Studebaker, J. D. Oliver, Elmer Crockett, P. O'Brien and J. B. Stoll; of the Northern Indiana Historical Society, and of all who have been privileged to look upon them. The story that inspired them, "LaSalle in the Valley of the St. Joseph," is fully told in the succeeding pages of this volume.

C. H. B.

R. H. L.

SOUTH BEND, IND.,
June, 1899.



PHOTO BY W. B. STOVER.

IN LA SALLE PARK.

Preface.

In the light of present knowledge, it is not possible to assert beyond all danger of cavil whether this or that particular Canadian Frenchman first beheld the banks of the St. Joseph. Some have thought that Father Claude Allouez, a Jesuit priest and missionary, first knew of our river. Some have supposed that Father Marquette once journeyed this way. But that either of them was entitled to the honor of discovery, is purely a matter of conjecture. It does, indeed, seem not unlikely that Allouez, who was with the Miami Indians in 1672, should have followed them from their Wisconsin home when they migrated to this valley. He was certainly here at a later date, devoting the closing years of his life to the work of the mission on the St. Joseph, where he died in 1690. But in the case of Father Marquette, there is not even good ground for conjecture, unless it be in the wish which we all share that the benison of a presence so gentle and gracious might have expressed the white man's first salutation to the bluffs and pebbly strands of our river. Then, there are the two adventurers, Radisson

and Des Groseilliers, who explicitly declare that they themselves visited this entire region as early as 1659. This statement, however, is not generally believed by the historians. Some of the latter are probably not far from the truth in their intimation that many of the obscure Canadian voyageurs, in pursuit of the traffic in furs, and the wild coureurs de bois, while living with the Indians, may have been here before all others without leaving any record of their exploits. But if we are to satisfy ourselves with the positive assertions of unquestioned history, we must credit the discovery of the St. Joseph and the Kankakee rivers to the hero famous in American annals under the name of LaSalle. His coming was late in the fall of 1679. A brief epitome of his career previous to that date may help us to keep in mind the motives that prompted his expedition and the circumstances that made it possible.

LA SALLE, THE EXPLORER.



LA SALLE AT 22.

LaSalle, the Explorer.



A fair and famous city in the north of France gave LaSalle to the world. Rouen, on the picturesque Seine, not far from the sea, was noted in ancient times as Normandy's capital. In the sacristy of one of her old cathedrals is preserved the heart of Richard Cœur de Lion, and in her public market place,

many centuries ago, Joan of Arc met death at the stake. Modern Rouen is known as the leading city of France in industrial enterprises.

LaSalle, born in 1643, was a child of luxury. His father, Jean Cavelier, a rich merchant and land owner, belonged to an old, influential and

aristocratic family, but one degree below the French nobility. The son was christened Robert Cavelier Sieur de LaSalle, the final name given him in honor of a big landed estate of the family, in accordance with a custom among the wealthy French burghers.

The boy early displayed intellectual gifts of a high order and he was given a first-class education. He was reserved, dignified, studious, and he improved his opportunities to the utmost. It is told that he was especially proficient in mathematics and in the exact sciences. While he was a mild-mannered youth, he early exhibited the traits of determination and independence characteristic of his later years. In the face of losing his inheritance to his father's rich estate, he joined the order of the Jesuits to become a priest; but when he discovered that his temperament was not at all conducive to that calling, he left the order. Yet he was always considered a good Catholic.

It was in the spring of 1666, that LaSalle, just arrived from France, presented himself at the door of the Canadian Seminary of St. Sulpice, in the compact little village which has since become the city of Montreal. This young man was fortunate enough to obtain what he sought from the priests of St. Sulpice, the gratuitous grant of a large tract of their wild land. The grant bordered on the St. Lawrence and

was situated at a point up the river, some nine miles from the Seminary settlement. LaSalle began at once to clear the land, to mark the metes and bounds for a village and to erect for himself a house and storage buildings; for, he meant to engage in the fur trade, and to use this estate as a base of supplies and a point of vantage from which he might take part in the exploration of the vast interior of our continent. He had come here with such purposes fixed in his mind. His ambition had caught fire from the vague rumors and startling theories which at that time supplied the French public with much entertainment and excited the liveliest interest in their new-world possessions. The Indians had told the Canadians of the Mississippi, and the latter had assured the people at home, that the great river surely flowed into the Pacific ocean; and the people at home had developed strong hopes that the Mississippi might prove to be a practical highway over which France would sustain commercial intercourse with China. LaSalle could have a part in the enterprise which such a prospect seemed to invite. Applying himself at once to the study of the Indian languages, he was soon ready to begin his explorations. The latter were conducted first through the country at the north. Finding this of little interest, he turned to the south and is believed to have been the first

white man on the Ohio and to have followed the course of this river as far as the site of Louisville.

The endurance of supreme hardships and the survival of great dangers emboldened LaSalle to set up a new establishment still deeper in the wilderness. He desired the command of Fort Frontenac, then being built by the governor at the very head of the St. Lawrence, and on the north shore of Lake Ontario. To secure such a prize, one so necessary to his plans, he went to France. He was well received at court and the idea of his projected enterprises proved so captivating to the king that the latter gave him the seigniory of Fort Frontenac, with the military command of the place, and bestowed on him patents authorizing his trade with the Indians and the exploration of the lakes and the western country. He was willing to bear the expense of these explorations, trusting to the fur trade for reimbursement. His plans required even a second trip to France. And this time he secured a monopoly of the trade in buffalo hides and the authority to build new forts in the western country which he should explore. He now borrowed large sums of money, which his favor at court enabled him to do. He purchased and brought back with him supplies for the building and equipment of two ships, one to sail the upper lakes and one for the waters tributary to the Mississippi.

ON THE LAKES.

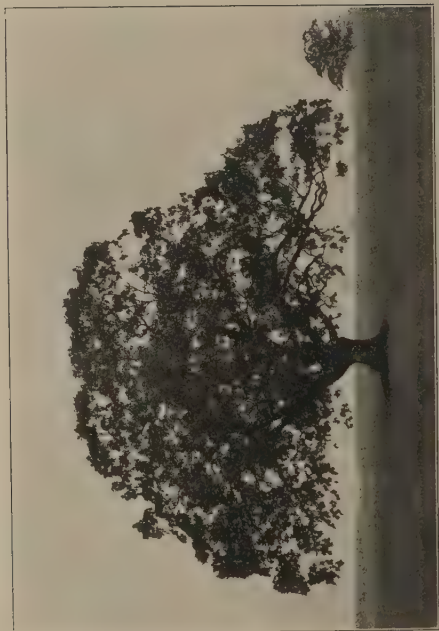


PHOTO BY W. B. STOVER.

THE GUARDIAN OAK, PORTAGE PRAIRIE.

On the Lakes.

And so, we find LaSalle, in the winter and spring of 1679, at the mouth of a creek that empties into Niagara river some miles above the falls. The materials for the two ships had been dragged up the heights that line the river and carried a distance of more than 12 miles, where a suitable place for ship building had been found. Here the keel of the "Griffin" was laid, a vessel of forty-five tons burden. The work all done and the equipment completed, it was August before the vessel was drawn up into Lake Erie. The building of the ship was a matter of intense interest to the Indians, who thronged the banks where the hull was finally launched and who were consumed with wonder down to the moment when the rejoicing crew, having spread the great sails, boomed their five little cannon, sang their Te Deum, sped away with a free furrow and held their course through the very midst of the inland sea.

To the mouth of Detroit river came the little ship and in due time Huron's beautiful expanse received the adventurous band. But Lake Huron was not in a mood to submit tamely to

the white man's conquest of these ancient solitudes. A fierce squall arose. The pilot swore and the others prayed to the saints, and through their mutual endeavors, the frail bark outrode the storm. They reached the Straits of Mackinac in safety and made fast their anchor at Point St. Ignace, where Father Marquette's mission house then stood. The priests and their Indians came down to the shore with words of welcome and tenders of hospitality. It was a state occasion with LaSalle. Clad in a court costume of scarlet, all gorgeous with gold lace—this for the benefit of the Indians—he, with his little group of followers, issued forth from their "floating fort." While the surrounding woods echoed with the discharge of their musketry, they unfolded to the gaze of the simple natives the banner of France with the arms of Louis XIV. These functions discharged, they went up the rising ground with the priests to the chapel and knelt before the altar.

Long before this voyage of the "Griffin," LaSalle had sent his agents to this locality to gather furs through the surrounding country. He now learned that a few of them who had remained true to his interests were at Green Bay, where a valuable cargo awaited the coming of the ship. The "Griffin" was accordingly sent forward to gather these first fruits of their

enterprise, while LaSalle, with fourteen men, embarked in canoes and followed the vessel. Tonty, with another division of the party, was to keep to the east coast of Lake Michigan. The "Griffin," laden with the furs, was ordered back to the head of Lake Erie with the strict injunction that its precious cargo should be conveyed to the block-house, at the mouth of Niagara river, and that a return as speedy as possible should then be made to the southern extremity of Lake Michigan. LaSalle and his men set out with their canoes and followed the west coast of the lake past the mouth of Chicago river and around the southern coast. It was a most tempestuous voyage, as one on Lake Michigan at that season of the year is apt to be.

It might seem that our hero had thus far found an easy and smooth path. But the truth was otherwise. Indeed, he was one of those unfortunate mortals who find their advance contested at every step. His success excited the jealousy of powerful rivals, since it seemed to threaten the prosperity of their own cause. The Jesuits had entered this western world and desired to remain the sole masters of its destiny. LaSalle was partial to other orders, the Recollects, the Sulpitians, the Franciscans. And then, too, he was a fur trader, although very different from most of his class. This class was one which exerted a most baneful influence at

the missions, almost wholly subverting the work of the church. Where the seed of faith had been planted through the long and painful labors of the devoted missionary, it was distressing in the last degree, if not exasperating, to see the first tender leaf of the savages' new aspiration torn and uprooted through the gross immorality of the fur trader and his lewd and sottish companions. The Jesuits deemed it highly necessary that the whole tribe of fur traders should be excluded from the wilderness. Nor would they consent that the case of LaSalle was exceptional, although they well knew that his life was in every way commendable, that he was a devout christian and that he sincerely desired their prosperity. It was plainly their hope that not only the faith and the morals of the woods should be left to them, but that the secular interests, as well, should never escape their supervision and control. They opposed LaSalle at Fort Frontenac, complaining to the Governor with the severest aspersions against LaSalle's life and character. They declared that his motives were purely selfish and mercenary, that his methods were dishonest and his daily life extremely vile. The first charge fell to the ground, for everybody on the St. Lawrence knew that this man at all times, in his poverty and in his days of triumph, was forever thinking and talking of

those things that would help the work of the church, increase the prosperity of Canada and redound to the glory of France. As for his trade with the Indians, the latter loved him as a true man, and all that he did was justified by his patents from the crown. And as for his morals, a very prompt and unexpected investigation established his character as that of a man whose conversation and conduct made him a model of propriety.

But calumnies, often repeated, will in time warp the popular judgment. These things made enemies for LaSalle, enemies who rose up in unexpected places to thwart his best laid plans. Nor did these evil rumors fail to reach the court in France and to arouse suspicion and prejudice there, creating conditions very hurtful to the cause of this upright man. And then there is ample evidence that the Jesuits sent men to engage in the service of LaSalle for the purpose of stirring up discord among his attaches and encouraging desertions at critical times. Nor was this enough. The Indians themselves were tampered with and, in several of the tribes, were made to believe that LaSalle was the secret ally of their enemies; that he was thus a man to be summarily dealt with. Surrounded by such malicious foes, it is not surprising that LaSalle was soon complained of as a silent man, one who kept and followed his

own counsels. And this leader of men had still other enemies. The traders who lived at Montreal thought that LaSalle would buy up all the furs in the western country and ruin their business. They made their attack upon him as venomous as possible and were so successful in carrying out their plans as to seriously impair his credit. But the utmost endeavors of his enemies could not restrain this determined spirit. Strong in conscious rectitude, he quite overcame them all. While the silly contentions with which he was continually harassed were indeed unfortunate, yet they never abated his noble energy; nor did they in any degree dim the virtues that marked LaSalle as the best specimen of manhood that France ever sent to the St. Lawrence.



ON THE ST. JOSEPH.



PHOTO BY W. B. STOVER.

BELOW THE PORTAGE.

On the St. Joseph.

And so, one may say that it was by no means an easy path over which he had come, when LaSalle, at length found the harbor at the mouth of the St. Joseph.

In the picturesque highlands of southern Michigan, not far from the city of Hillsdale, two rivers of the same name have a common source. One courses southward into Ohio, then threads off into Indiana and mingles its waters with the River Maumee at Fort Wayne. It is known as the Little St. Joseph, or the St. Joseph of the Maumee. The other, which is the outlet of a lovely lake, the Baw Beese, flows north-westward a considerable distance, then makes an abrupt turn southwesterly, dipping down into Indiana, entering the state near the village of Bristol, Elkhart County. Thence its course is westerly until the city of South Bend is reached, when a graceful and lengthening curve is made in the stream towards the north, and in that direction it runs rapidly on to the great lake, forty miles away. This is the big St. Joseph, or the St. Joseph of the Lakes.

In the Michigan uplands, where these two

rivers rise, which form the dividing ridge or watershed between the two great lakes, Erie and Michigan, other large streams find a source, also. One, the Kalamazoo, rushes northwesterly, and another, the River Raisin, takes an eastward course. Yet, of all these pretty rivers whose fountain-head is in the same locality, none have waters quite so clear, there are none with channel so broad and deep, with current so swift, with windings so graceful; none whose valleys are so fair and fertile, whose banks are so high and picturesque, or about whose willow-fringed shores cling legends so romantic and cluster memories so historic as the St. Joseph of the Lakes; our own beautiful St. Joe, the explorer's River of the Miamis, the Sauwk Wauwk Sil Buck of the Pottawatomies. This river's fame is known the continent over. Her beauty is preserved in picture, and her glory told in song. Such were the scenes that welcomed our hero.

His arrival was on the first of November, 1679, and the season of the year, perhaps, contributed something to the melancholy doubts that now began to weigh heavily on the spirits of the party. Tonty had been delayed while hunting up deserters. So they busied themselves in the building of a very necessary fort, and awaited his arrival. The king had instructed LaSalle to build as many forts as he deemed

expedient. He located one here as an asylum for his men, in case hostilities in the southern country should compel a retreat. This was LaSalle's Fort Miami, and our river he called the River of the Miamis, because that tribe then claimed our valley as their own. His men next sounded the depths of the harbor and stationed buoys marking the channel. And it is said that they planted two high poles where the waters of the river meet those of the lake, and fastened bear skins to the tops of these poles. This was for the purpose of attracting the attention of the pilot, when the "Griffin" should arrive. After a long delay, they were joined by Tonty and his men, but the little ship never found its way into the mouth of our river. It is believed to have been wrecked near Beaver Island, in Lake Michigan. The rich cargo was a total loss and all on board went down with the ship. The party at the St Joseph lingered through the month of November, hoping that some word might come from the ill-fated bark, and then sadly set out with eight canoes on their journey up the river. They must find the portage path that will lead them to those springs whose waters had found a way to the great Mississippi. For sixty-five miles and more they will urge the boats against a swift and heavy current. Poles and paddles and leading ropes will lay a severe tax on their energies, before they may quit the

scenes of the St. Joseph. Those familiar with our river during the summer months, may feel some surprise to note how black and angry its heavy current becomes under the leaden sky of winter, and when the first severe blasts from the north have fringed its banks with ice and snow. The sunniest spot on the highest bluff will then be cheerless enough. This valley is no fairy land in December. And it is not strange that in the explorer's party certain murmurs and mutterings of discontent should now be heard.

And who were these adventurous souls toiling up the rugged channel of the St. Joseph in spite of doubts and fears? First, there was the invincible LaSalle, the leader of the expedition, with his faithful friend, Henri Tonty, the second in command. The latter was the son of a noted financier, the author of the Tontine system of life insurance. LaSalle was a devout Christian, and so, we are not surprised that his party should have included three Recollect friars. Of these, the venerable Father Gabriel Ribourde, now 64 years of age, was destined in a few days to perish at the hands of the savages, and to add his name to the long list of those martyrs whose apostolic zeal was the transcendant glory of France in America. With him was Zenobe Membre, who was to labor as a devout missionary of the Cross among the Illinois, and then to follow the fortunes of LaSalle to the

last bitter end, when the wretched remnant of the colony gathering around their devoted priest, perished in the wilds of Texas. The third member of this religious order was Louis Hennepin, one whose cowl and gown could scarcely disguise the man of the world. And there were John Boisrondet and L'Esperience de la Brie, of whom the former was reputed to have been the private secretary and accountant of LaSalle, and the latter a body servant; though LaSalle himself says that he never had an accountant, nor a servant of any kind, while in the wilderness. Jean Russell was one of this band. He and LaSalle had formerly been partners in the fur trade on the St. Lawrence. Moyse Hillaret was the master ship-builder, with Noel le Blanc and Jean le Mire as ship carpenters. John le Milleur was the nail maker. His companions had nicknamed him "The Forge." There were also two pit-sawyers, whose duty it would be to work out the planks for the new ship on the Illinois. The others, with one exception, were soldiers, boatmen and adventurers who had attached themselves to the enterprise for the sake of the excitement in store for those who should penetrate the secrets of the vast and mysterious west. The exception was White Beaver, the Mohican hunter, who stood head and shoulders above three-fourths of this motley crew, above them morally as well as

physically. For, this son of the forest was the ideal of devotion and, next to Tonty, the most valuable, as well as the most reliable, support that LaSalle's cause had been able to find in all the high-ways and by-ways of New France. When all but a very few of those engaged in this expedition had deserted their valiant leader, and in some cases had stolen his possessions, White Beaver stood faithful and true. Those who have loved to follow, with Cooper, the fortunes of Natty Bumppo and the Great Serpent and Uncas, and who have marvelled at the traits of character with which fiction has endowed the "Last of the Mohicans," * may find in White Beaver an actual personage who was, in truth, one of the last of the Mohicans. Here is a red man whose figure in history is the living counterpart of those creatures of the imagination whose personalities are so wonderfully portrayed by the renowned novelist. It was the ever-faithful White Beaver whose skill sup-

* When our ancestors drove the Mohicans out of Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut, the tribe fled for safety far from the face of the white man. LaSalle found a part of them on the little island tracts of the vast marshes of the Kankakee. Embowered here in the alders and luxuriant growths of reeds and grasses, they found a snug retreat, safe from foes both red and white. They could follow the chase on the main land, but the canoes by which they came and went left no tell tale trace behind. The late Mr. Albert Birner, while a student in the South Bend High School, investigated some of these island tracts in search of evidences of occupancy by the Mohicans. He found numerous fire-places with flint chips and arrow points and the usual remains that mark the home of the Indian. These things he properly regarded as a part of the sequel to the New England record of this interesting tribe.

plied their larder with the products of the chase. He was their guide through the wilderness and their guard against lurking dangers; for, his eye alone could detect the "fearful Indian signs," and his judgment supply the timely warning. There was a strong bond of affection between LaSalle and White Beaver, alike worthy of each.

When these hardy forerunners of civilization had reached the spot where the portage path was to be found, they did not recognize the place, because the ground was covered with snow. White Beaver, the guide, was not with them at the time, having left the canoes for the purpose of hunting. Their failure to discover the landing proved a grave misfortune, for it was attended by a series of ills that contributed not a little to the weight of fear and gloom to which the braver hearts among them now seemed ready to succumb. The landing where they should have drawn up their canoes to take the portage path, is located on the north side of the pronounced bend, or loop, in the river, situated in Section 27, German Township. We do not know how far they ascended the river beyond this point before their mistake was discovered. It is fair to presume, however, that they could not have continued for any great distance above the spot known as the south bend of the river; for they must soon have discovered that beyond this place the trend of the river-bed led away

from the region of the Kankakee. They landed and prepared to search for the portage. LaSalle, in his eagerness to find the path, set forth alone and unarmed. And here the unexpected happened. He was soon lost. We say the unexpected, for it would appear very strange that a man with LaSalle's thirteen years of experience in woodcraft should lose his bearings. But the situation was one which might easily confuse any explorer. He was on the spot where the very tip end of the Kankakee valley merges into that of the St. Joseph. Over this spot the water of the latter river once ran, when, in ancient geological times, the portion of our river above the south bend was a continuation of the valley of the Kankakee. LaSalle was looking for a ridge which should divide the two river valleys, and this was the particular spot where no sign of such a ridge was easily found. He doubtless supposed that the hills to the south of the present road between South Bend and Mishawaka, formed that ridge and strove to reach their summit. In doing so, he was compelled to pick his way through the long, swampy tract lying between these hills and the St. Joseph. The view from the highland showed him the great Kankakee marsh on the west. But in his return to his companions, he missed the devious path by which he had come, and tried to go around this marshy tract extending

for several miles to the east. Tonty says that "he had to make the detour." In so doing, he must have gone east nearly as far as the present site of the village of Osceola. Here he came again to the banks of the St. Joseph.

Night had overtaken him in his wanderings, and he was hastening forward, with thoughts inspired by weariness, hunger and the alarm which he knew his friends had felt from his prolonged absence. A light twinkled through the undergrowth and he supposed he had found the encampment. He rushed forward with a great shout. A solitary form rose hastily from the side of the fire and darted away through the forest. LaSalle called loudly again and again, in his most reassuring tones, using several Indian languages, but the apparition had fled and would not return. If neither friends nor food were at hand, at least a bed had been found, and the doughty explorer did not hesitate to appropriate the comforts of the fireside from which the unwilling host had retreated sans ceremony. The thought of fear for his personal safety seldom troubled this man LaSalle.

The next day he wandered along our river in search of his friends. Having passed the present site of Mishawaka, he was found by Tonty "two leagues above the portage." A few minutes later the White Beaver joined them. Two leagues above the portage, if we follow the

meanderings of the river, would bring us to a point within the present city limits of South Bend, probably not far from the Michigan Street bridge. The finding of LaSalle was an immense relief to Tonty and the Indian, and, of course, to LaSalle himself. In the greetings of the Frenchmen Gallic enthusiasm must have found a very hearty expression; nor could the high lights of the scene have suffered from the foil which they certainly found in the sedate composure of the Indian guide. The three made their way down the bank of the river to the portage landing, where they joined their friends late in the afternoon. Here they observed that the thoughtfulness of Father Ribourde had prompted him to cut crosses on the trees, so that their lost leader might recognize the place, in case he should wander by while the party was away looking for him. Many of the trees in this region had been blazed by the Iroquois war parties in making signals for their friends. But trees marked by the Christian symbol would be understood by LaSalle without any peradventure of mistake. Tonty speaks of the great joy of these anxious ones over the restoration of their captain.

This meeting at the landing supplies the subject for the first painting, "LaSalle at the Portage, Dec. 5th, 1679." See frontispiece.

THE OLD PORTAGE LANDING.



The Old Portage Landing.

The spot where the ancient portage path left the St. Joseph is one of rarest beauty. Few could be indifferent to its charms. There are some of us who remember it tenderly from those early days when we approached the place in a boy's voyage of discovery down the river. The great ox-bow which the stream makes at this point, as it turns from a due west course to one due east, is held in place by a lofty and steep bank skirting the outer margin of the curve throughout its entire length; in fact, the river, in past ages, has made a vast amphitheater in this place by its deep excavations in the bluff that constitutes the eastern margin of the prairie.* In those other days the banks were

* In the days of French exploration, the Indians called this prairie "Ox-Head Prairie," as Charlevoix has told us. The name was derived from the circumstance that an ox-head of "gigantic size" had once been found here. This may have been the head of a buffalo, or it may have been that of a mastodon washed out of the glacial debris that everywhere underlies this prairie, and sometimes yields the remains of both the mastodon and the mammoth. In southern Ohio, the remains of the mastodon were found on the surface of the ground, when the white man first appeared. So the name which the French rendered "Ox-Head Prairie" might have been Mastodon Prairie in pure Miami. Our century has known this tract as Portage Prairie, because *across it ran the ancient portage path* to the head-

more heavily wooded and the shades were hence a little more pronounced. The water was deep and dark, and almost without current or eddy. As our boat drifted slowly along the outer margin of the curve, we looked up to find ourselves in a spot quite fit for some tale of strange enchantment. The fine arc of the river's course enclosing us on three sides, the high slopes of the walls of living green, and the long shadows that lay motionless on this unwonted calm of the stream, kindled emotions not yet forgotten nor soon to be. Those who have viewed the place will feel no surprise that one of the oldest inhabitants of the locality should be able to recall that the Indians loved to draw up their canoes along this shore, and that almost any day a few fires were to be seen at the portage landing on the north bank. The last remnant of the vanishing race clung fondly to these scenes. They loved the spot, and so may we. There is an atmosphere about the place; yet the spell it works is not in any way weird or uncanny, but such as may soothe the spirit and draw it into a mood for sober reflection.

If you will climb up the high bank at almost

waters of the Kankakee. There is a northern extension of this prairie, reaching for many miles—nearly as far as Buchanan, Mich.—with open spaces here and there running toward the St. Joseph. The soil would lead one to think that the entire tract was at one time an open plain, on which, ages ago, the forest began to encroach, until the northern part, when the white man came, was much cut up by long tongues and islands of the woodland.

any point in this bend of the river, you may observe numerous cedar stumps several inches in diameter. Such cedars were once plentiful here, as indicated by these remains and the small growths still surviving. One such tree still stands, as you will plainly note, a grand old sentinel on the south arm of the river's arc. In the other days this great cedar had a companion on the north side very close to the landing itself. Only a stump of the latter tree remains, but it is more than seven feet in circumference. Its red heart holds the entire story of the white man's exploits at the portage landing. East of the landing and half way up the bank, and now by the winding road side, stands a white oak, You will not overlook it. Its glory had been shorn by storm after storm, but it still flung to the breeze one tattered ensign of green, until the severe drought a few seasons ago quenched its feeble energies forever. This venerable monarch, also, could unfold the tale of the Frenchman's bold adventure and high design. It could tell us, too, of the time when its leafy arms reached far out over the ford that crosses the river here, just in front of the spot where its massive trunk rises from the sand; and, perhaps, it could tell of those men who, ages ago, placed stepping stones here from bank to bank. It could tell us of the great herds of buffaloes that sometimes filed down the portage path and

across this ford to the groves beyond and the open plain far to the east.* Nor can one turn away from this aged oak without wondering whether the compact folds of its growth do not somewhere contain the traces of one of Father Ribourde's crosses.

At a point on the high bank near the center of the river's curve, a savage scout might have concealed himself, when the Miamis, in 1681, came up the St. Joseph to meet the Illinois, their relatives, whose towns had been laid waste by fire and plunder and themselves compelled to fly before that relentless foe, the dreaded Iroquois. The scout would fasten his eye on the north arm of the river; for, around the sharp bend far to the east will come, by twos and threes or in lengthening line, an immense flotilla of canoes. All of the Miamis will be there, thousands of them, man, woman and child, all fired with one impulse, the defense of their friends against the implacable enemies from the far east. The sharp eyes peering

* The meadows and open forests along the St. Joseph—especially in this part of its course—were known to the old French inhabitants as the "*Parch aux Vache*," or cow pastures; and this title is said to have supplanted an older Indian name of similar import. It had such a name because it was a famous resort for the buffalo. Father Hennepin tells us that the buffaloes were here in such numbers that the Miamis "sometimes killed from one hundred to two hundred daily." And he adds that they did this by setting fire to the grass so as to enclose a herd of these animals in a fiery corral and thus force them to pass a given point in making their escape. At this point the Indians stationed themselves with their bows and arrows.

through the cedar trees, will count the painted warriors, as each canoe struggles through the stony rapids below the ford. This skulking foe will lie close to the sod, as these same canoes swing into the quiet expanse below. When night has fallen and the kettles are swung and the fires are burning, he will steal nearer to catch, if he may, the warnings of the old men, the counsels of the chiefs, the vauntings of the young men and the songs of the brave. How rich must have been the savage traditions that clustered around this spot! What life-long memories must have centered here! Now the rendezvous of friends, and now the ambush of some deadly foe, it listened, in turn, to high hopes and burning counsels or caught the dark fears that glanced from eye to eye. We do not easily forget those spots on earth where our strongest emotions are greatly kindled. Such a spot was this to the Red Man, and the memories in the savage breast must have been like the perpetual green of these sloping walls.

But whatever the native charms of the locality to which their wanderings had brought them, this region had nothing but threatenings of disaster in store for these brave men. The party had encamped at the portage. That night, LaSalle and Father Hennepin slept in the same lodge, a structure improvised after the Indian fashion out of mats and plaited

bulrushes resting on bent saplings. During the night their lodge caught fire, and those who have left an account of the accident thought that the inmates made a narrow escape from death. The bank of the river just above the landing is steep and high, but from the landing itself there leads away a narrow yet exceedingly beautiful defile, which rises by an imperceptible grade to the prairie on the west. It meets the prairie at a point where the latter crosses the Niles, or Portage road and makes its nearest approach to the river. This same place on the edge of the prairie is also reached by a wide path that lies in and by the side of the present east and west drive-way, extending from the Niles road to the landing and beyond. Either the narrow defile, with its broad, smooth path, or the present east and west drive-way, may mark the course of the ancient portage path. Doubtless both were in use. Near the spot where the defile comes to the Niles road, a tract was uncovered, in establishing the grade of the highway, where children for years have been accustomed to find glass beads and those trinkets which indicate the site of the fur trader's home. The fur trader got under the shadow of a fort, whenever it was possible to do so. Our best historians have thought that LaSalle built a second fort at the portage during one of his subsequent journeys. These

beads might serve to show where this fort stood, as well as to establish a point in the portage path.*

* Mr. Robert Myler, former Auditor of St. Joseph County, who owns the land surrounding the old portage landing, has donated nearly two acres of ground directly on the line of the portage trail, to the Northern Indiana Historical Society, under the condition that it be used for the erection of a monument to the memory of LaSalle. The Society is taking steps to mark the spot with a temporary monument, and hopes in time to be able to erect a bronze statue of the explorer there. The place is still in its native state and is called LaSalle Park.



PHOTO BY W. B. STOVER.
ABOVE THE PORTAGE.

CROSSING THE PORTAGE.



Crossing the Portage.



OLD WITNESS TREE.

On the morning of December 6th, the hardy explorers, gathering together all their effects, prepared to cross the portage to the Kankakee. This was no slight undertaking, as will appear to one who considers the conditions. We have seen that the party ascended the St. Joseph in eight birch-bark canoes. These canoes had been purchased

from the Indians at one of the fishing grounds of the Chippewas, the Straits of Mackinac, and they were each large enough to carry from ten to fourteen persons. There were thirty-three people in LaSalle's party and most of them

were embarked in four of the canoes. The remaining four were loaded down with the equipment of the expedition. This equipment consisted of merchandise for barter with the natives, the clothing and arms of the party, the cooking utensils and a small amount of food, together with an extensive outfit for the building of that vessel which should be a companion ship for the "Griffin." This ship-building outfit included a forge and bellows with the blacksmith's anvil and his tools; also a considerable amount of iron to be made up into nails, bolts, plates, rods, etc. And there were the ship's carpenter and joiner tools and a pit saw for sawing planks.

There were, of course, no beasts of burden at hand and no wagons. Every article taken across this prairie, a distance of nearly five miles, must be borne on the backs of men. And, besides, the canoes themselves must be carried over. They were of very light weight, comparatively speaking, consisting of nothing more than frail cedars for framework, covered with the thin bark of the white birch. But such was their bulk and shape that each must be taken on the backs of two men, one at either end of the canoe. They could not be conveniently handled by less nor more than two men. Here, then, was employment for sixteen of the party. The others must bend under the burden of the

equipment, consisting in this case of several thousand pounds. Some of the men were aged; Father Ribourde was sixty-four. Yet, we do not doubt, he carried his full share; he had shown a disposition to do as much at the Niagara portage. Both cheerful and full of enthusiasm, he had always sought in every way to inspire the men. How much did LaSalle himself carry? And what kind of a burden could the round and jovial Hennepin bear? Whatever share was taken from one man's shoulders must be laid on the already overburdened back of another.

In starting on one of these wilderness journeys, it was customary to make very careful estimates of the capacity of each member of the expedition as a burden bearer. And in later times, it was the rule of the fur companies that any man who gave out on a portage, or fell with his burden, should be deserted in the wilderness. This might appear an awful penalty for laziness or an outrageous wrong against the weak and infirm. But, it was one of those iron rules which awful necessities made imperative; for, under such circumstances, when a man threw down his burden, the valuable wares would in most cases be a total loss, and the mere attempt to prevent such loss might prove disastrous to the entire expedition. It was always greatly desired and generally indispensable that the entire work at a portage should be

performed at one trip; for, should the party be divided in guarding the effects at both ends of the portage and in passing to and fro, some lurking enemy might easily overcome the separated detachments. And such enemies were ever in wait for those whose feet must press these wilderness paths. Indeed, the solitary Indian whose bivouac LaSalle had surprised, suggests that such a foe was at hand, awaiting an opportunity of attacking the party when it should cross our prairie.

That there should have been an open prairie at this place, was a fortunate circumstance, since it afforded some protection against ambush. All who mention the scene speak of it as one of great beauty, a gently rolling tract, dotted with clumps of trees and covered with a heavy turf. In the summer months, a sprinkling of flowers gave a flash of color to the view, changing as the season advanced. Those who saw the western prairies in their pristine loveliness, declare that the prevailing tint which the flowers gave the landscape in springtime, was red; in midsummer, blue; while in the autumn it was yellow, a herald of the approaching fall of the leaf.

A summer's day on our portage had a charm all its own, a charm for those whose nerves were not too sensitive to the ever-present element of danger. The buffalo was there and

innumerable deer; the fox and the lynx threaded their careful way where the grass was tall; wolves looked hungrily over some rising knoll; the panther had his lair in the wooded tract; and the black bear trundled across an arm of the prairie or sat on his haunches in the shade of a solitary oak and dreamed of acorns that were ripening for him. But when the dark December days had come and cutting blasts brought to the St. Joseph the greetings of the marshes and, with the advancing season, the snow began to pile itself higher and higher, it was a scene to weigh heavily on the heart of the traveler.

And such, we are told by LaSalle, was their first view of the prairie. Stout men might have been forgiven for thinking of home and for shedding tears and begging their doughty leader to turn back, so completely would the wild desolation of the scene break down the spirits of even the brave. The ground was white with snow and the field was dotted everywhere with the skeletons of buffaloes that had perished here in the drifts of the preceding winter. In the stare of those eyeless sockets there was an evil omen, and only too well did these worn pilgrims divine its meaning. Threats of mutiny began to be heard. The food supply had been growing very short of late, and thoughts of famine, the scourge of the wilder-

ness, had for many days kept these travelers in a troubled state of mind.

LaSalle had shown them that for this reason, if for no other, they should press on to the Illinois country, where it might be that better conditions awaited them. He was a good talker, and by example, too, he was able to rouse their failing courage and to inspire them again and again with that conquering enthusiasm that filled his own soul, as it must the souls of all who would achieve nobly. But appeals, however inspiring, could not overcome all opposition. One of the men whose abhorred name was Duplessis—doubtless bearing some ill-will against LaSalle and determined that the party should go no further, resolved to kill the leader. Stealing up from behind, this villain had raised his gun to shoot LaSalle in the back, but the timely interference of others averted the catastrophe. This act of murderous treachery being happily forestalled, they followed on across the prairie. But it was a critical moment and came near putting a final and fatal period to the career of LaSalle.

Crossing the portage was not a general scramble over the prairie in almost any line, but it was a single file along a very definite path. Those who remember the locality from the days previous to the survey of the Michigan road speak of the path as deep and straight. In

places it was so deep that a man on horseback could almost touch either bank with his foot. On the prairies a wagon rut will sometimes wash into a miniature gully during a rainy season. But not so the path worn by the unshod hoofs of the wild herd or the one pressed into the soil deeper and deeper, year after year and age after age, by the moccasined foot of the savage. And, it is wonderful, how these old avenues of the life that is gone still exist almost without change, in those localities where the axe and the plow have spared the native conditions of the virgin soil. There are many tracts in our valley where portions of these paths may still be seen, and for some mysterious reason nature has refused to encroach upon their venerable precincts with any plant life of the larger growth, and the old trail now, as in days of yore, winds plain and distinct. And we can understand why this portage path should have been a deep one.

Unnumbered ages and countless hosts well knew the trend of this ancient highway; ages when the hosts of the lower Mississippi and the Gulf sought the copper mines of the upper lake region. Not only in the mounds throughout the great valley and the Gulf region, but also in the oldest of the Peruvian tombs, are found implements and tokens made from the Lake Superior copper. And we may not doubt that

the traffic which these facts imply was itself, in part, responsible for the depth of this path. Nor is it strange that it should have been a straight path. We may easily imagine that backs bending under the weary loads would not allow the shuffling, staggering footsteps to wander even a little from the shortest line between the two water courses.

The length of this path is four and eighty-five one-hundredths miles, and this is the shortest distance between the St. Joseph and the accessible waters of the Kankakee navigable for boats during all seasons of the year. Father Hennepin states that the Kankakee has its source "on the west side" of this prairie. This was doubtless a correct description in his day, although as this generation has known the prairie it does not seem to extend so far to the west. A strip of woodland intervenes between the head of the Kankakee on the west and what we have known as the limits of the prairie in that direction. But the notes of the government survey of the Michigan road state that the regions covered by the western part of the portage path were "very thinly wooded," in 1840, and the soil there is for the most part like that of the open prairie. In our century, the forest had begun to encroach on the prairie, just as it is known to have done on the borders of the Green River prairies in Kentucky, since

the settlement of that country by the white man. So, in LaSalle's day, our prairie extended farther west.

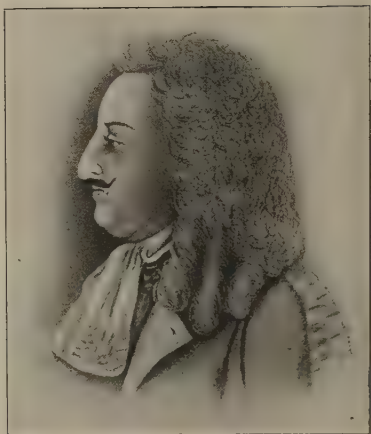
Here, then, on the west side of the prairie, in the midst of what Hennepin calls "much shaking earth," referring to the well-known spongy soil of many of our quaking marshes, began the much-sought-for Illinois, or Kankakee, river. This source of the great river consists of several small pools, some of which are in the marshy tract and two the first and the last - in the surrounding hills. They run one into the other, and finally into the first of what we know as Chain Lakes. From the lower end of the south lake puts out the little stream which, together with an arm lying still further west, forms what is marked on the earliest government surveys as the "Grapevine," a name highly suggestive of the trouble which LaSalle and his party experienced from the extremely zigzag course of the uppermost parts of the Kankakee. The Grapevine, as every hunter knows, is one interminable series of crooks and turns. It forms the main part of the upper Kankakee, and is joined by the south arm at Crum's Point. The south arm rises in a spring on the extreme south margin of the marsh, with miles of swamp lying between it and the dry grounds contiguous to the portage landing of the St. Joseph.



Photo by W. B. Stov

CRUMSTOWN TRAIL, NEAR THE ST. JOSEPH.

TREND OF THE ANCIENT PATH.



LA SALLE AT 42.

Pela Salle

Trend of the Ancient Path.

The scholarly priest, traveler and essayist, Charlevoix, came this way in September, 1721. He and his Canadian boatmen did not try to get across the portage in one day, but encamped for the night on the high ground midway between the two rivers. He speaks of the spot as an "extremely beautiful place." We of this day call this elevated tract Mount Pleasant. It begins at the Mount Pleasant chapel on the Michigan road and runs north a mile or more, slightly increasing in elevation. From its summit may be gained a most entrancing view of the entire plain in which South Bend now lies, but where, in Charlevoix's time, a noble forest held sway. When he continued his journey the next day the path, he states, led him through damp ground. The straight course of the path beyond this elevated spot would lead him through low ground. He could have avoided the low ground by turning slightly to the south; but if he should do so, such a course would lead up hill and down hill several times, and this would be a serious inconvenience to the men carrying the canoe and no particular help

to those bearing the other burdens. Hence, like others, they preferred the straight path with its damp ground. The intersection of the portage path with the present Michigan Road is in section 25 of Warren Township. To the west of this point, the path, after quitting the present line of this road, lies mainly on the property of the Woolverton homestead. The present generation of that family remember the section of the path lying on their farm and recall the time when the Indians frequently came this way to reach the second of the series of little ponds which lie to the southwest of the house, and which are the very source of the Kankakee, as stated above. Charlevoix himself states that his men put the boat in the second of these ponds. The first one lies in the hills on the south side of the marsh, the outlet running north to connect it with the second. He puts his boat into the second because the first one could not be reached without a detour around the eastern section of the marsh, and because the second pond in the series is the first to which one comes along the line of this path. Furthermore, the first and the last of this series of Charlevoix's ponds are deeply imbedded in the hills. Their condition in La Salle's time was the same as now, except that they probably had more water at that date. In the summer they are now nearly

dry. One can find a series of ponds almost anywhere in the Kankakee marsh land, but they are of a temporary nature and seldom survive for many seasons. They are due to the fall fires burning out the peat accumulations and they are sometimes of considerable depth. But before this land was drained, such ponds disappeared in a few seasons from the closing in of the soft sides of the slough. In getting out of the series of ponds on the Woolverton estate, Charlevoix's men broke their boat. The little stream connecting the pools, after leaving the last one and working its way through a piece of high ground, makes a very sharp angle in turning toward the bog at the head of Chain Lakes. Such an angle was always dangerous to navigation when birch bark canoes were in use. The frail canoe lying on the water would hold a ton's weight of merchandise. But if it is to be lifted from its aqueous surroundings, its contents must first be carefully removed, lest any object of even light weight should spring a seam or start a rift in the tender bark. A boat such as we use can easily be pulled around a sharp angle in a narrow stream. But when Charlevoix's men tried to perform this operation, they broke the canoe. They would then have no difficulty in finding the necessary resinous material for healing the wound, for tamaracks flourished in the vicinity of these ponds.

But after the resin is gathered, it must be boiled for several hours before it is ready for use. Delayed for a day in his journey, Charlevoix sat down in the pleasant grove that surrounds the spot and, having nothing else to do, gave his minute description of the portage and these ponds. Thanks to that broken boat, we have the testimony of an eye witness whose statements, together with Hennepin's, enable us to trace throughout its entire length this ancient highway of the old life.

LaHontan, who viewed this region during LaSalle's time, represents the Kankakee as rising in a lake surrounded by a great beaver town. The whole region of the Chain Lakes was admirably adapted to the life of the beaver, the sedgy margins and the very shallow waters of the lakes being convenient for their house building and the near-by alder thickets supplying the materials. The late M. W. Stokes, in his map of 1863, dignifies the morass north of the first lake, by a name under which it was then known, Beaver Lake. This presumably is from the remains found there by the early settlers. These same early settlers long referred to the outlet at the south extremity of the last lake as the place of the beaver dam, a very large one standing there during the early days. Indeed, it is still plainly to be seen where the little creek leaves the marl flats of the lake for

the first dry ground. The old inhabitants say that this dam was such an unusually large one fifty years ago that it was well known to every one who lived in the neighborhood, and a topic of frequent conversation among the fishermen and hunters. It is about the last surviving piece of evidence tending to confirm the truthfulness of LaHontan's representations and the reliability of D'Iberville's enthusiastic letter to the French crown, when he declares that this western country had great natural wealth, and that the region of the Kankakee and the St. Joseph was the place where "beavers are plenty." Other evidence of the life of the beaver is sometimes to be found on the dry ground near the lakes, for here occasionally one may find a beaver tooth. The spot was the site of the Miami town referred to by the early explorers. It was a very large town in LaSalle's day ; for six or seven thousand of its inhabitants went with him from this spot to live near his fort at Starved Rock, on the Illinois River. According to the Red Man's manner of life, such a town would cover a region several miles in extent. "Mad" Anthony Wayne afterward laid waste the settlement of these same Miamis extending for many miles along the Maumee. The abundant Indian remains in the vicinity show that the Miami village here must have quite surrounded the lakes

and at the time of LaSalle's coming, it extended as far as the middle of the prairie through which the portage ran. For the account tells us that LaSalle could see the tops of their lodges from the St. Joseph end of the path. The conspicuous heights at the middle of the prairie would make this possible for lodges standing there. Indeed, Charlevoix forty years after LaSalle's first visit, found in this very place the remains of a fortified village of the Fox Indians. Nearby springs made the locality one suitable for the Indian's home. But the evidences of the presence of the Miamis, while numerous throughout the entire shore line of these lakes, are most abundant on the west side of the south lake and around the little outlet, the head of the Grapevine.

Nor were the Miamis the only ones who tried to hold the portage in the days ago. The mound-builder, long ages before, was here. On the northwest bank of the south lake, just south of the Lake Shore tracks, are three large mounds and two small ones. They have supplied some of the finest of the copper axes in the South Bend collections, and in the vicinity are the usual cloth marked fragments of pottery and broken stone implements indicating the presence of that old race whose remains are so conspicuous throughout the valley of the Kankakee and the Illinois. In plain

view of the mounds and of the little outlet lower down the lake, are the localities where one may find abundant remains of signal fires on the highest points of land at the east side of the south lake. What fears chilled the blood of those ancient guards on these hill-tops? What hosts did they summon to the defense of this gateway between the great valley and the northland? And what was the issue of the struggle—what the fate of the vanquished? The mounds on the west and the hill-tops on the east, with the quiet lake between may share these secrets with the stars, but human records will boast of little more than the bare truth that primitive man once loved these scenes, and here in the day of his might challenged the invading foe.

But the Miamis, who were the lords here in 1679, however they might contend with others who would force these gates, offered no protest to LaSalle's passage through their domain. The dignified manliness of his bearing commended this leader to the heart of the savage. The emphasis of his positive nature, coupled with his far-seeing prudence and his inflexible integrity, were the very elements of character with which in those days the Red Man's favor was easily won and permanently secured. Here was a white man with whom the Indian could effect an understanding. And so the

little party held their way in safety down the oozy, zigzag channel of the Kankakee. As they disappear beyond the clumps of tall grass we may ask why those Frenchmen were struggling through this remote wilderness in that year of grace, 1679. What did they seek and what motives prompted their quest? They sought empire! And those who have followed their further fortunes know at what a fearful cost the prize was ultimately won. After Father Marquette had discovered the Mississippi, La Salle had been the first to understand that the great river flowed into the Gulf of Mexico and not into the Pacific ocean, as many had believed and all had hoped. And he alone seems to have realized that immediate and vigorous action was necessary, if the French would forestall the Spaniards on the south and the English on the east in taking possession of the great central valley. To seize and hold this vast domain for France he was willing to devote his worldly possessions and his life. He felt that such a prize would not be dear at any price which he could pay in honor. It was his hope, however, that the cost of the undertaking could be met out of the profits of the fur trade, and he naturally strove to make those profits as considerable as possible. But personal gains were not a prime object with La Salle in any of his undertakings. His would

be the exalted task of adding to the French realm and planting the cross in fields where its blessings had never been felt and its praises had never been sung. He sought an empire which should be held in the name of France and which should be devoted to the glory of God.

Concerning this new empire, of which the valleys of the St. Joseph, the Kankakee and the Illinois were to be a conspicuous part, the priest, the traveler and the soldier of those times spoke in terms of unstinted praise. They praised the land for its delightful climate, which they maintained was well suited to the cultivation of the grape and the olive. The three varieties of the native grape—the blue, the red and the white—they even declared superior to the product of French soil. They were never weary of descanting on the abundant food supply derived, chiefly, from an unusually prolific soil, with its new plant life of marvelous and bewildering variety, and, in part, from the wonderful animal life teeming in every lake and stream, or thundering over the prairies in vast herds which no man could count, or rising on the wing in darkening clouds as limitless as the hosts of Armageddon.



THE WILDERNESS EMPIRE.

The Wilderness Empire.

On hearing these tales of the great West, those who had taken up their abode among the inhospitable rocks of the lower St. Lawrence longed to exchange their cold sky for the more congenial airs of this favored clime. Across the sea these stories of the riches of the new land supplied a most exciting diversion. The after-dinner talk in Paris indulged in very pleasant speculations over the fresh glory that Frenchmen were to achieve in a realm where nature was so benign. Theirs was a prospect as inviting as it was unique. The savages were to be won to the faith, and all in sweet harmony were to devote this land to religion and the fur trade. It was not to be a country of planted fields and great cities. Frowning forts of solid masonry were to guard the marts where the industries of France might furnish suitable exchange for the natural wealth of the wilderness, and in the shadow of bastion and turreted walls were to rise the cloister and the cathedral. It is not strange that the modern historian should have paused so often to speculate on the outcome that might have been had French life

realized the vision that in those old days rose before the court of Versailles and long occupied an important part in its more serious plans and purposes, and its pious as well as pleasing meditations. There was, indeed, the full promise of something very unique in human affairs—a great nation of devout Catholics, in which a worshiper with features overcast with American bronze should lisp Christian prayers in French accents; a race in which the gay and pleasure-loving ways of a mild peasantry should be harmoniously commingled with those of the cautious, keen-eyed and meditative Indian. It might have been, it would have been, had it not become necessary to reckon with the aggressive Anglo-Saxon; for it was the Anglo-Saxon that, with little ceremony and less regret, tore from its gilded frame the last vestiges of the fair picture. And yet France had been given a hundred years in which to work out her dream—a hundred years in which the English language was to be a barbarous and unfamiliar jargon to the white men living on the banks of our river. A hundred years, and yet how little now survives to tell of that old life! The antiquarian knows where, in some secluded spot, the spade and sieve will bring to light a gun-flint, a few glass beads, a silver buckle and a hand wrought nail; and such are almost the sole remains of French empire in

all the great valley. It might have been otherwise, it doubtless would have been, had any worthy successors appeared to take up the work of LaSalle and Tonty. Had the spirit of LaSalle, which was the practical and indomitable spirit of our age, and which was worthy of any age, had his spirit found a proper appreciation at home and a suitable following here, it must have wrought out for his native land much more than the full fruition of her fondest hopes. It must have wrought out for his beloved France and for his still more beloved faith a permanent empire, secure against the Anglo-Saxon and the world.



Historical painting from the studio of H. F. Huber & Co., New York. Arthur Thomas, artist.
LA SALLE AT THE MIAMI TREATY, PORTAGE PRAIRIE, MAY, 1681.

THE MIAMI TREATY.

The Miami Treaty.



A KANKAKEE GLIMPSE.

The American Indian has always hailed with delight any proposal for a friendly council. His most conspicuous figure in recorded history is connected with the treaties made through the free exchange of opinions at such a council. He was fond of the council, because it enabled him to display such savage finery as his wardrobe might include, and because of the feast of good things and the general hilarity that followed the solemn deliberations. But the

supreme attraction of the council was the thea-

ter which it alone afforded for a public exhibition of the philosophy and the rhetoric of the woods. The "applause of a consenting multitude" was the object of an Indian's highest ambition and the source of his keenest gratification. The studious decorum with which these assemblies were regulated, the moving eloquence of their orators and the care with which every opinion was weighed, have filled the page of the chronicler with expressions of astonishment and admiration.

It is an interesting fact that a celebrated treaty made by white people with the Indians was the outcome of such a council held on our Portage Prairie in 1681. The parties to this compact were, on the one hand, LaSalle and his followers and, on the other, the Miami nation. This treaty was one of the most important achievements of LaSalle's life, since it alone, at that juncture, could insure the success of his plans. The great French explorer, as we have seen, had penetrated these western regions, and having built forts, was seeking to hold the country in the interests of the French crown and to control the fur trade. But the fierce Iroquois Indians of New York were also in this territory with their war parties, seeking to subjugate the various tribes and secure their trade in the interests of the English on the Hudson. Nothing in the annals of savage warfare is more ter-

rible than the depredations committed by these Iroquois in this western country. During LaSalle's absence they had destroyed the great town of the Illinois tribe and compelled the remnant of that people to fly far into the depths of the wilderness. They threatened the utter ruin of all the plans of the French. To check the Iroquois and to provide for the common defense of the native inhabitants, LaSalle sought to form a coalition of all the western tribes and to move the principal bands to the vicinity of Starved Rock, on the Illinois river. He had matured such a plan while spending the winter at his stronghold, Fort Miami, at the mouth of our St. Joseph river. He had retreated to this place for safety after having witnessed the desolation of the Illinois town. He found the various tribes favorable to such a plan of defense against the great enemy from the east; but its permanent success could not be assured until he had won the powerful Miamis to the support of the cause. The Iroquois, however, were subtle enough to discover what was going on and, anticipating the movements of the French, they laid siege to the hearts of the Miamis with such success as to strongly incline them toward the English. At this critical moment, LaSalle, with ten companions, visited the town of the Miamis on our Portage Prairie and in the Chain Lakes region, and invited these

Indians to a council. They consented to hear what LaSalle might have to say. They would hold a council at the lodge of their head chief on a certain day and when the sun stood at a certain height in the heavens.

This head chief was a very remarkable man. Both the Jesuit missionary, Father Dablon, and also Nicholas Perrot, the most famous of all voyageurs, have left tributes to his memory. They represent him as kind-hearted and gentlemanly and possessing great intellectual penetration. So just and wise was he that he was held in great esteem, even among other tribes more or less hostile to the Miamis, as was shown in the delegations which such tribes were constantly sending to consult this wilderness law-giver concerning their own affairs. Father Dablon says that he was a savage only in name. Yet this priest was probably the first white man whom the chief had seen. When the hour for the council arrived some of the mats were lifted from the lodge of this head chief and the tent poles moved to one side, so that the people might see the council and might hear the discourse and understand the nature of the transactions that were going forward. The prominent warriors of the tribe were arranged in a semi-circle on either side of their great leader, and before them stood LaSalle with his companions around him.

The scene was one well worthy of the brush of some great artist. The little prairie over which their glances swept from time to time, and through which the portage path then ran, is spoken of by the early traveler as a place of great beauty. Its eastern margin reaches in one spot almost to the landing on the St. Joseph, where the Frenchmen had drawn their canoes out of the water, and after rising by gentle swells to the high point where these lodges of the Miamis then stood, the plain sinks gradually to the west—to that series of ponds and little lakes that are the very source of the Kankakee River. From the elevated spot at the centre, the vision easily includes many miles along the charming valley of the St. Joseph on the east, the tract where South Bend now stands. In that day, sylvan avenues replaced our streets and gigantic forest trees our dwellings, trees that stood far apart and lifted their lowermost branches thirty to forty feet from the ground. Beneath, no undergrowth was allowed to survive, but everywhere was spread a soft, thick turf, while here and there in the park-like vistas could be seen the antlered buck or the does with their fawns.

But when those who had assembled for this council turned their eyes to the south and the west, they beheld the great fens and marshes

of the Kankakee land sweeping far away with the river's onward course to the plains of Illinois and the Mississippi. Glistening pools everywhere dotted this vast area, pools that were the homes of countless millions of water-fowls. Flocks of plover and snipe swept around the borders of the marsh land, while the cranes stood in a row in the shallow water, or rising on slow and ponderous pinions, filed off in a never varying line toward the sky's silver edge. A veritable cloud of ducks and geese and swans coming in from the swift cold waters of the St. Joseph, fell into the silent pools with splash and clamor and confusion of buffeting wings. The unaccustomed eye of the guest in this Indian encampment must have given more than a passing glance to this endless whirl of happy life that fluttered over the marshes. But the red skinned host fixed his gaze not on the water fowls, not on the hundreds of hawks that patrolled the vast fields of wild rice, but upon the great war eagles that rose on slanting pinions, "climbing their airy spirals to the clouds." Happy the Indian whose brave deeds were such that his tribe would allow him to fasten to his hair the plumes of the war eagle. Each feather is an historical record. The first one stands for the brave act in which this hero overcame his people's foe at the ford near the portage

landing. The next marks the time when he repulsed the Kickapoos that lay in the tall grasses along the Kankakee to ambush a Miami hunter. And this third feather stands for the victory which he won when the young men of his tribe contended with the Ottawas on this very prairie in their famous ball-play.

But concerns apparently more important than the birds of the air filled the mind of LaSalle as he turned to meet the glance of those flashing eyes that alone gave animation to the dark and rigid features of these men of the wilderness. One can picture in his fancy the stalwart explorer, with penetrating eye, flowing hair, and bronzed, stern visage, standing fearless and self-reliant and drawing to himself the unflinching gaze of those solemn auditors. LaSalle, at the height of his strong manhood, was then thirty-seven years of age and in perfect health. He was of powerful mold, but there was nothing of the braggart in his disposition; yet, when it became necessary, he displayed both his physical strength and his mental force. He was a genuine human dynamo when thoroughly aroused and in action. Neither affrighted by goblins, nor awed by threats, he was, withal, a cultivated and refined gentleman, and could shine in the palace of a king as well as in this Red Man's wigwam. The listening warriors were quickly moved by

his eloquence, for LaSalle was deeply skilled in the forensic arts as they held sway at that time in the American forest. His first act was to distribute among them some tobacco. This, he said, was to clear the brains of his auditory. But LaSalle knew well that with these Indians the act would stand for something more. With them the use of tobacco was, primarily, a religious ceremony. They regarded tobacco as the especial gift of the Great Spirit to his red children, and they thought that he was greatly pleased to see them enjoy his especial gift. So LaSalle's first appeal was to their religious instincts. This founder of French empire in the West had come into the wilderness well prepared for his arduous task. At his home on the St. Lawrence, he had made a profound study of Indian character, as his conduct on this occasion plainly reveals, for he next kindles their emotions by a sympathetic allusion to their dead. Unfolding before their astonished gaze great bundles of rich French cloths, "These," said he, "are to cover the graves of your dead." And then he placed in their hands some well-made garments, which he declared were also for the comfort of the dead. It is not necessary to suppose that any of these gifts would actually be laid on the forest tomb. It was only the Indian way of saying that he bestowed these gifts on the living as a



compliment to the dead that his respect for the living was such as to animate him with a desire to hold in sympathetic memory even those of their friends who had passed away. Then he went a step farther, and stated that he had heard of the recent death of one of their chiefs. "I have determined," said LaSalle, "to bring him back to life." This was their way of saying that he would provide clothing and food for the family of the dead chief. The audience understood his figure of speech and broke forth into a perfect rapture of applause. He had now won their hearts.

And does it seem strange that Indian hearts should be won by a respectful reference to their dead? Was the memory of the departed such a tenderly sacred thing in the bosom of the Red Man? Did he truly love the graves of his fathers? Read the story of the removal of any Indian tribe, of our Pottawattomies, for example, from its home country to some allotment of land in the southwest. In every case it will be found that one of the strongest objections urged against yielding their ancestral territory is the pain they feel at the loss of the graves of their friends. This objection the white man has commonly laughed to scorn, nor has he been at any pains to conceal his contempt for what he has deemed a mere subterfuge. But in truth, the Indian practices no deception in

this matter. He is very sincere in what he says. He loves the graves of his friends, because he has no sort of doubt that the dead still live and long for sympathetic attention, and that their spirits may be communed with at the tomb. It may be recalled that nearly four thousand of the Cherokees perished when the tribe made the journey from their home in Georgia to Arkansas, and that of these, it is said, none perished of any known disease. We say of any known disease, because modern culture regards lightly the disease once spoken of as a broken heart. They declared that it was the graves of their friends for which they mourned. The white man smiled in derision and the cavalcade of sorrow moved on through the valleys and over the hills of Tennessee. But one by one, they fell out of the ranks and crept up under the shades of the hemlock and pine, and throwing themselves on the bosom of Mother Earth, died of a broken heart. It is true that not many of us can die of a broken heart, but almost any Indian could. We are sorry that our ancestors did not understand the Indian. We wish that they could have understood him as the French did, as LaSalle did. The latter having won their hearts, proceeded to show them at this council what great advantages might be theirs, if they would stand under the banner of the great king, referring to

Louis XIV. And then he paused to distribute among them a whole boat load of axes and guns and blankets and beads and knives and ornaments, all as an expression of the good will of the great king.

These things done, LaSalle resumed his discourse. "He who is my master," said he, "and the master of all this country, is a mighty chief, feared by the whole world; but he loves peace, and the words of his lips are for good alone. He is called the King of France, and he is the mightiest among the chiefs beyond the great water. His goodness reaches even to your dead, and his subjects come among you to raise them up to life. But it is his will to preserve the life he has given; it is his will that you should obey his laws, and make no war without leave of Onontio, who commands in his name at Quebec and who loves all the nations alike, because such is the will of the great king. You ought, then, to live at peace with your neighbors, and above all with the Illinois. You have had causes of quarrel with them; but their defeat has avenged you. Though they are still strong, they wish to make peace with you. Be content with the glory of having obliged them to ask for it. You have an interest in preserving them; since, if the Iroquois destroy them, they will next destroy you. Let us all obey the great king and live

together in peace under his protection. Be of my mind, and use these guns that I have given you, not to make war, but only to hunt and to defend yourselves."

And now, to confirm his words and to supply them with a token of his pledge to be their defender, he handed to their chief two belts of wampum. This is the subject of the second painting, "The Miami Treaty."

The chief received the tokens. His act was significant, for it showed that he and his people were disposed to consider carefully the propositions of their French guest. The chief made no further reply, but dissolved the council. He could make no further reply until the members of his tribe had been given an opportunity to express their preferences. But they did not deliberate long among themselves, for it was found that all with one accord called loudly for the French alliance. So the following day the council was convened again, and the chief gave the tribe's endorsement of a treaty of mutual helpfulness between Miami and Frenchmen. The oration of the chief was a series of metaphors in which he accepts for his people the protection of the great king, and pledges to his cause the "beaver and the lands of the Miamis," and themselves individually body, intellect and heart. His speech has all the ecstacy and sincerity of a lover's

song. And the Anglo-Saxon must admit that it was greatly to the credit of the French that their empires in the American wilderness were thus wooed and won.

*About seven thousand of these Miamis went with LaSalle and took up their abode at Starved Rock, on the Illinois river. After LaSalle had lost his life in Texas and Tonty had retired from the Illinois country, Father Allouez brought back a remnant of these people to their old home on the St. Joseph.





From a painting by L. Clarence Ball

APPROACHING STORM ON THE KANKAKEE.

ANCIENT AND MODERN TESTIMONY.

Ancient and Modern Testimony.

The accounts of the early explorers refer to a prairie as lying between the St. Joseph river and the head waters of the Kankakee and state that a portage path passing from one of these rivers to the other ran across this prairie. The head waters of the Kankakee are in our county and are well known, and the prairie referred to is alike conspicuous. The latter has always been known from the first settlement by the present population as Portage prairie, and it lies between the St. Joseph and one of the two sources of the Kankakee. No prairie lies between the St. Joseph and the other source of the Kankakee. There can be no doubt, then, that the region which we call Portage prairie is the one over which the French explorers passed in going from the water-shed of the Great Lakes to that of the Mississippi, when they used the route of the St. Joseph. The record of their passage through its confines is preserved in the very name of the prairie itself, "Portage" prairie. And not only did the explorers clearly state that the portage used in ancient times crossed this prairie, but Charlevoix has carefully described the latter.

It is plain, however, that the *modern* portages did not cross this prairie. Many of the government maps and early surveys refer to them as elsewhere; namely, farther up the river. The township in which South Bend is located is called Portage township, apparently recording the fact that some of the modern portages led through its confines. The ancient portage could not have led through our township, because it led across the prairie

which is not in our township, but is in German township, below us on the river. Therefore, we conclude that the *modern* portages led through Portage township and many people now living remember that such was the case and that the *ancient* portage led across Portage prairie, the portage path leaving the St. Joseph where prairie and river most nearly approach each other. This place of nearest approach is at the pronounced bend of our river to the west, in Section 27, German township.

And not only does the position of this prairie establish the route of the portage path, but the line of this path and the place where it left the St. Joseph, are both just where one might reasonably suppose them to have been; for, it is natural to believe that the path would have left the St. Joseph at a point where this river approached nearest to the accessible waters of the Kankakee. There can be no doubt that the shortest distance between the two rivers would have been the route of the portage in ancient times, all things being equal; because those making the trip were compelled to carry their boats and luggage from river to river, and the saving of even a few rods under such circumstances would have been most desirable. To go up the river further than this point in German township is to compel the traveller to come back on his course, in order to make the detour of the northeast end of the Kankakee marsh. This would be no objection in modern times, when wagons and horses were to be had and the boats and luggage could be hauled to any convenient spot on the Kankakee, as at Chess' Island or at Crum's Point. But in ancient times, having neither horses nor wagons, they would surely seek the shortest distance between the two rivers. This is a straight line leaving this westerly bend of the St. Joseph in German township and extending nearly due west across this Portage prairie to the little ponds that

lie at the head of Chain Lakes; and this distance is between $4\frac{1}{2}$ and 4 85-100 miles.

Again, we may know that this spot on our river is the one where the portage began, because of its geographical location. Following the meanderings of the river, South Bend is located about 70 miles from the mouth of the St. Joseph and about five miles above this bend in German township. Tonty, the friend and companion of LaSalle, states that LaSalle and party ascended the St. Joseph 27 leagues. The Canadian league, which is the equivalent of the French Posting league, is 2.42 miles (2.42219). Taking the Canadian league as the standard in use by LaSalle and party, the distance from the mouth of the river to this bend is, according to Tonty, $65\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Tonty's estimate of the distance thus conforms closely to the known distance from this bend to the mouth of the river. And here let it be stated that if we take the French league, 3.025 miles, which some have sought to maintain was the standard in use, it would make the distance of the portage $81\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the mouth of the river, or more than 16 miles farther up the river. To go 16 miles farther up the river, is to go far away from any prairie that could have been used and far away from any waters tributary to the Kankakee. (See letters herewith from Gen. John S. Clark, of Auburn, N. Y.)

The foregoing facts satisfy us that the portage path left the St. Joseph river at this bend in German township. But in what part of the bend did it leave the river? The very high and steep bluff rising from the water's edge throughout the curve of this bend makes us believe that the path must have left the river either on the north side, where there is an old time depression leading down from the direction of the open prairie at the place of the prairie's nearest approach to the St. Joseph; or, the path must have left the river on the

south side of the bend, where Mr. Brookfield locates one of the earliest of the modern portages. Mr. Brookfield lived near this bend of the river from 1828 to 1831. That the portage path used by LaSalle left the river on the north side of this bend is determined by the following evidence :

Mr. Parkman states in his work, "LaSalle and the Discovery of the Great West," (see note on page 154,) that Charlevoix has given a graphic account of this portage used by LaSalle and that the account is to be found in one of the letters in the Journal of Charlevoix's travels. In his Journal Charlevoix states that he came up from Fort St. Joseph, located where Niles now stands, that is, just above the river dam at Niles, a distance of about six leagues, or $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This corresponds to the known distance of this bend of the river from the site of old fort St. Joseph. Charlevoix states that he disembarked on the right and walked $5\frac{1}{2}$ leagues, "first following the edge of the water, then across the fields into a great prairie." Now, for more than a mile below this bend it was possible for Charlevoix to disembark and follow along the edge of the water as far as the place of landing on the north side of the bend. Had the place of landing been farther up the river, he could not have followed beyond the north point, because of the high and very precipitous bank coming to the water's edge along the line of the curve. He followed along the edge of the water so as to be near the boat because it was dangerous for one member to be separated from his party. He does not say that his men took the boat from the water, nor would they have carried the boat and luggage while they were able to advance on their way by continuing on the river. They could not advance on their way beyond this north point, nor could Charlevoix have followed them "at the edge of the water," had they gone further. It therefore seems inevitable

that both the pedestrian on shore and his men in the canoe must have come to the landing at the north point of the bend in the river and their journey on the St. Joseph terminated here. Had Charlevoix disembarked on the southern extremity of this bend in the river, he could have followed along the edge of the water only as he took a direction opposite to the prairie across which he desired to go and really did go.

Again, Hennepin states that "this place," the landing, "is situated on the borders of a large field." The spot on the south side of this bend was not situated on the border of any kind of a field. The spot on the north side was so situated on the border of a large field. The testimony of those who saw the prairie in a state of nature, as well as the soil itself, affirms that the prairie extended down to and across the present Niles road as far as the beginning of the old time depression leading down to the landing on the north side of the bend; while no witness that we have ever been able to find, has affirmed that the prairie in any way approached the point on the south side of the bend, the fields surrounding it being covered with heavy timber. Some of the witnesses who have testified concerning the old line of the prairie are Robert Cissue, Joshua D. Miller, Robert Myler and the late James R. Miller, and the soil itself confirms their testimony.

Also, it seems reasonable that those who used the portage should have left the river at the point where they could find the most direct route to the accessible waters of the Kankakee. This spot is on the north side of the bend, as the map will show.

We know of no reason why anyone should suppose that the ancient portage path left the river on the south side of the bend, except the fact that Mr. Brookfield so located the portage landing in use in his day. When horses were used, the portage might well have left the

river at the point where Mr. Brookfield's land came to the river and where he had laid out a town. To show that Mr. Brookfield's representations in the matter are not reliable, we wish to call attention to the fact that while Mr. Brookfield *in his map* of the locality locates the portage landing on the south side of the bend, he states in his *field notes* that the landing was at a point in the middle of the bend. But the latter is a spot where it could not have been under any circumstances, it would seem, because of the fact that the bank is fifty or sixty feet high at this point and very precipitous.

Charlevoix states that he "went across the fields into a great prairie." The eastern rim of the prairie slopes to the east, and with its scattering trees may have been what Charlevoix calls "the fields." He went "into a great prairie;" not around the southern edge of it and barely entering the prairie on its lower margin. He states that he encamped in "an extremely beautiful place." While we cannot tell where he disembarked on the banks of the St. Joseph, since he for a time "walked along the edge of the water," so that we do not know where to begin our measurements: yet the next day he went "a league farther into the prairie" to reach the very head waters of the Kankakee. So, if we measure east a Canadian league from the ponds at the head of Chain Lakes, we will be approximately at the place where he encamped. This spot is the high land to the north of the Ritter homestead, in Section 29. The high ground in the vicinity of the Ritter and Jones homesteads, near the middle of the prairie from north to south, is one of the most beautiful spots in Northern Indiana, commanding a view in all directions that never fails to excite the admiration of the beholder. And we are not surprised that the poetical temperament of Charlevoix should have yielded itself unreservedly to the charms of this locality. Encamped, then, on the

straight line joining the north point of the bend in the St. Joseph to the ponds at the head of Chain Lakes, and in the elevated locality to which we have just referred, he went a league farther into the prairie. To the west of the spot where he encamped the pathway is smooth and gradually sinks for a half mile, "a regular toboggan slide," as one has said, and then maintains quite a uniform condition, skirting along the base of low hills lying on the south and terminates in a water hole, such as occurs occasionally in the prairie. Beyond this there is an ascent of fifteen to eighteen feet and then a level tract very gradually descending, until near the western extremity of the ancient prairie the line of the path emerges into the present route of the Michigan road. From this point to the second pond, as indicated on the map, the course is smooth and even. This second pond is to the south and a very little to the west of the Woolverton house. This family remembers the trail to have reached from this second pond to the point where the line of the portage, as we have indicated it, meets the Michigan road. Following the straight line of the portage path as outlined one observes, south of its western half, a continuous series of hills and dales heavily timbered and over which a boat could be carried only with the greatest difficulty. Some of the ponds are situated in an extensive tract of marsh, or what Hennepin calls "much quaking earth." The first pond lies in the woods to the south and could have been reached only by making a detour around the marsh. Its outlet runs north into the second pond. The second pond of the series was therefore the first one that the traveler would come to in the line of the path. Hence Charlevoix states that he "put his boat into the second pond." He further states that the ponds were a hundred paces in circumference, the largest one. This would give a diameter of about one hundred feet. The contour of

the bed of the first and the fourth ponds would seem to fit this description. The others are a marshy tract and their exact limits difficult to define, but are plainly within the space of three hundred paces. The outlet from the last pond has a very abrupt turn, less than a right angle. Here one might have broken a boat. The connection between the third and fourth ponds has apparently been deepened and straightened, whether by a modern or an ancient ditcher we are not able to affirm.

LaSalle, himself, and the English governor of North Carolina, Daniel Coxe, both gave the length of the portage as two leagues, or 4.85 miles. Mr. William M. Whitten, the well known civil engineer of our city, states that the length of the portage path as herewith defined is very nearly 4.85 miles.

The distance to the accessible waters of the Kankakee in any other part of its course, measuring from the south side of the bend in the St. Joseph referred to heretofore is in excess of five and one-half miles, and going by way of the southernmost part of the high land in the prairie, is nearly six miles. It is necessary to measure to some part of this high land in the prairie, because both Hennepin and Charlevoix speak of the journey across the prairie in unmistakable terms. But why should they have gone into the prairie at all, if they wished to go to any spot on the Kankakee in the direction of Chess' Island? To go into the prairie and then turn at an angle, almost a right angle and go south, was to add greatly to the distance over which the boats and luggage must be carried. If they wished to go in the direction of Chess' Island, why did they not follow along the old trail known as the Crumstown road? The hypotenuse of a triangle is shorter than the sum of the other two sides. If they had desired to go in the direction of Chess' Island, they would not have gone into this prairie

at all. But we know from both Hennepin and Charlevoix that they did go into this prairie and that they went across it. Therefore, the conclusion seems to us unavoidable that they did not go to Chess' Island nor to any point in that direction.

In this connection, we desire to call attention again to the fact that many hundreds of relics of the stone age, as well as those characteristic of the French trade, have been gathered in the fields bordering Chain Lakes. They are most abundant around the lower Chain Lake and in the field to the east of Charlevoix's ponds. But we have never heard of anyone finding such specimens at Chess' Island or in that vicinity. If the Miami town had extended in that direction, the evidences of their life there would now be at hand.

Furthermore, it is plainly stated by Father Hennepin in his account of LaSalle's first trip, that there was a village of Miami and other Indians "at the extremity" of the prairie on the west side and that the Illinois, or Kankakee, had its source in that place. Since Hennepin thus plainly states that the Kankakee end of the portage, to which they had gone, was situated on the *west side* of the prairie, why should any one look for it at Chess' Island, far to the south of the prairie? To do so is to take issue with Father Hennepin.

It has been supposed that only the half of this portage path was in the prairie. But it seems evident that all of it, or very nearly all, was in the prairie land. The part to the west of the Ritter and Jones homesteads, and lying in Sections 30 of German and 25 of Warren townships, are within the regions which the first survey of the Michigan road shows to have been the original western extension of the prairie, the field notes of that survey stating plainly that the tracts along this line were very thinly wooded. And the soil shows that the greater portion of the tract along this western section

of the portage path must have been at one time an open prairie. The surface of the level and higher ground along the line of the path is covered with the dark, deep and heavy soil so characteristic of the prairie. Mr. William M. Whitten, referred to, states that he is convinced from the government survey maps and field notes that the western portion of this portage path must have been through a western extension of the prairie, dotted with clumps of trees here and there like the eastern parts of the prairie. Thus, it seems clear that the Miami town situated on the very head waters of the Kankakee, was also situated at the "extremity" of this prairie "on the west side," as Hennepin has told us; and that this great Indian town extended to the east as far as the high land in the middle of the prairie.

The first survey of the Michigan road laid out the course of that highway along the line of this ancient portage path, beginning at the edge of the Wolverton marsh and keeping to the path until very near the point of the latter's intersection with the present Niles road and then following that road to South Bend. This is significant, because it was customary in the early days, when a new road was surveyed, to make use of existing highways, whenever possible. Later, it was found convenient to cut off this angle in the Michigan road by using the line as now established.

On his map of the county published in 1863, the late Mr. M. W. Stokes has shown these ponds and the contiguous marsh as a lake, to which he gives the name of *Beaver* lake. The drainage of the surrounding territory sometimes fills the basin of this marsh with a shallow lake during the early spring. But when these waters have subsided, there still remains the little ponds on the south side supplied by perennial springs under the adjacent hills. The place was well called Beaver lake, for here were the perfect conditions of the beaver's

home. LaHontan, a French traveler of the LaSalle period, shows in his map that there was a large *beaver town* in the spot where the Kankakee took its rise. See Winsor's "Cartier to Frontenac."

The usual condition of the loose, saturated soil of the marsh to the west of South Bend has been such for ages that no ordinary boat could be forced through the stagnant pools of mud, the rank growths of reeds and tufted grasses. Much less could any passage be found for the frail bark canoe; for, it must be remembered that a birch bark canoe, such as was in general use here in ancient times, could not safely be pushed or pulled through a marshy bog, unless such canoe, be entirely relieved of any contents, and even then, this rough treatment would be hazardous. A boat made of solid timber submits to such usage without serious hurt, but a loaded birch bark canoe will spring a leak where the water is not deep enough to keep it afloat. These conditions of themselves will explain why the Indians and the early explorers carried their canoes across the prairie and made no attempt to force a passage to the Kankakee through the marsh to the south of the prairie. Stanfield lake lying immediately west of South Bend, in Section 9, Portage township, is sometimes spoken of as the Kankakee end of the portage by those who do not understand that its waters are tributary to the St. Joseph. That this lake never has been the source of the Kankakee, is shown by the fact that its waters cannot be made to flow in the direction of that stream, although extensive ditching has been done for that purpose. This is because the watershed lies to the south of that lake. The elevation thus separating the drainage is indeed so low that it is not apparent to the eye; nevertheless, it is very effective. The local conditions are curiously illustrated in one of the ditches crossing the watershed from north to south. This ditch receives a tributary at

the very dividing line of the watershed, and the result is that the waters discharged by this tributary divide at its mouth, part flowing north for the Great Lakes and part south for the Mississippi. He who witnesses the gentle adieu at the parting of this tiny tide, will yield a moment's thought to the distant and diverse fates in store for the divided current.

In the spring of the year, the freshets might occasionally have covered the upper Kankakee marsh with water, and it seems not at all improbable that under such conditions the portage might sometimes have been made by way of the Brookfield landing and a point on the marsh very near the Kaley farm, in Section 3, Portage township. Such a portage would have been less than two miles long. And they might have found a still shorter cut to this same spot on the marsh, by going up the St. Joseph a little farther. But such a portage could have been used only when the water covered the entire marsh or continuous portions of it reaching to the channel of the Kankakee river. Yet, such conditions would seldom be found and would then last but for a day. It seems, however, that LaSalle refers to something like this short portage by saying that it is "two leagues long when the waters are low," implying that the portage may be shorter when the waters are high, as during the spring freshets.

Therefore, in view of the facts as set forth, we conclude that the portage path from the St. Joseph to the Kankakee, used *in ancient times* by the Indians and by LaSalle and later by the French inhabitants, was a straight line from the north side of the most westerly bend of the St. Joseph in German township and extending to the little ponds in Section 25, Warren township, ponds still to be seen on the south margin of the marsh land of the Woolverton estate and which are located just north of Chain Lakes and are connected therewith.

Much interest attaches to the two red cedars of gigantic size standing one at either extremity of the bend in the St. Joseph from which the portage path sets out. They are of great age and have witnessed much more than the historic events that have made the locality famous. The one on the north side is now only a stump, but that at the south point still flourishes in lusty vigor. The attempt has been made to show that the cedar at the south point exhibits one of the crosses made by Father Ribourde for LaSalle's guidance, and that such a mark would consequently locate the portage landing in its vicinity.

The tree selected for blazing in ancient times, as well as in our own, has naturally been one with a trunk free from limbs or foliage that might obstruct the view, such a tree as the oak, walnut, ash or cherry; that is, where these trees could be found, and they were always numerous here. It is true, the lower limbs of this cedar have been removed; but this removal took place within the life time of the present generation, as may be seen from the condition of their stumps. So far as the evidence goes, this tree was not only of a kind such as would be least apt to receive a blaze mark, but its trunk was practically invisible in LaSalle's day.

Then, again, while the trunk of this cedar has been hacked by many a careless axe, yet none of these offenses against its noble dignity, resembles in any way a cross, nor even an Iroquois bark peeling, nor yet a modern surveyor's blazing.

And as for the age of these wounds, not one of them is older than people still living, as may be demonstrated by the layers of woody growth at the margin of the wounds, where any growth at all is to be found. The only one of these indiscriminate hacks thought to have any significance is found by digging in the sands washed around the tree from the bank and is located at the base

of the trunk. Nor does this particular mark differ in character from the others; for, it in no way looks like a cross or blaze of any kind and it is of recent origin, as shown by the condition of the exposed wood and the latter's nearness to the present surface of the tree.

Furthermore, this scar at the base of the tree is located on the side of the tree turned toward the very high and precipitous bank, whose protecting shade has made possible this gigantic cedar. The tree grew originally from the side of the bank, but a few years ago, the latter washed out near by and the sand has filled in around the tree and between it and the old bank. Beneath this filling and between it and the bank and at the base of the trunk is this scar. It could never have been seen by any one at the top of the bank, nor by any one passing between the tree and the water, nor could it have been seen at all, unless some one should take the pains to pick his uncomfortable way between the tree and the steeply sloping bank. Had one of Father Ribourde's crosses been hidden away in such a place, it must surely have escaped even the quick eye of LaSalle.



Near the south terminus of this historic bend in our river, is a ford similar to the one on the north side. This spot also is a place of interest, for here one of the great Indian trails crossed the river. The trail comes to the river flats through the old time defile a few rods to the east. Starting at the ford, the path is still easy to follow as far as the point where it intersects with the Niles road near the residence of Mr. James Ray. It is easily followed through the Jackson woods, on the opposite side of the road, and traces of it occur on several farms to the south. It comes to the Michigan road at the east side of the Kaley farm and then skirts the south side of the hill so conspicuous on that estate. Thereafter, its course is indicated by openings in the occasional timber

tracts as far as Crum's Point and on through LaPorte county. This trail parallels the Kankakee river and is the one over which the Pottawattomies of the Kankakee and the Illinois country, and many others as well, came to old Fort St. Joseph. After crossing our river at this ford, the trail forked, one arm constituting the well known path following the east side of the river to old Fort St. Joseph, and the other finally taking the line of the present Edwardsburg road. At Edwardsburg, this old highway struck the famous Sauk trail to Detroit and Malden, Canada. The present Edwardsburg road on the east and the Crumstown road on the west mark the line of this trail. And the meanders of the present road in each case well define the crooks in the ancient path. But the white man's road is the trail itself only in places. The Indian's path was always in the low ground and the defiles between the hills, when such places of concealment were within convenient reach. The very route of his path tells the story of fear and danger. The white man's wagon followed the direction of the trail but found that the path itself afforded a less agreeable passage than the rising ground near by. When the present Crumstown and Edwardsburg roads were first used, the adjacent woods were still open, the recent fires of the Indian having kept down the undergrowth. Hence a roadway at that time could be broken on the higher ground almost at will, and the preference then was to keep near the trail but not in it. So if one would find moccasin footprints, he must look through the native forest, first on this side of the road and then on that. Just to the south of Chamberlain's lake, in Warren township, and not far from the Chamberlain house, is one of these open defiles through the native forest, a fragment of this ancient path. One can scarcely convince himself that sixty years have passed since its

use forever ceased, so clearly defined is its course and so free from vegetation of the larger growth.

This Crumstown trail and road are dwelt upon here, because such has been supposed by many to have been the route of the ancient portage. That it was a prominent route of the portage in modern times there can be no doubt, for many are still living who have seen the boats hauled along this line. The boats were sometimes put into the Kankakee at, or near, Chess' Island, and sometimes were taken as far as Crum's Point where the road crosses the Grapevine. Such was Brookfield's portage. But this could not have been the ancient portage path, since *it does not enter the prairie*, but lies deep in the woodland throughout its entire length. After Brookfield's time, the St. Joseph end of the portage was moved still farther up the river and sometimes left the St. Joseph at places now in the very heart of South Bend. The use of horses and wagons made this increased length of the portage a matter of little consequence.



Designed and drawn for this work by Arthur Thomas, N. Y.
THE LAST OF HIS TRIBE.

GENERAL JOHN S. CLARK'S LETTERS.

"AUBURN, N. Y., Dec. 11, 1895.

"Dear Sir:—

Your note of the 9th inst. received. Your question is somewhat difficult to answer. Several different standards were in use among the French: The *liene de poste*, equal to 2.42 miles; the *liene moyenne*, equal to 2.76 miles; and the *liene géographique*, 3.33 English miles. I have made it a practice for several years to estimate the leagues of LaSalle and Champlain as of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, with most excellent results, while the estimate of 3 English miles invariably leads astray. I am unable to give any reliable information as to the French fathom. In a correspondence with the Superintendent of the Coast Survey several years since, in relation to LaSalle's operations in the vicinity of Pass Carullo, Texas, in which the question of the depths of the several bays was involved, the question was not raised of a difference between the French and English fathom. I made the point that the depths of Espiritu Santo Bay, as given by LaSalle, corresponded substantially with the depths as given on the coast survey maps. I am quite sure that if any material difference existed between the two standards, it would have manifested itself in that correspondence. I was not aware that any question could be raised as to the portage between the St. Joseph and Kankakee. The accounts of Hennepin and LaSalle appear to be very clear and definite on that point.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obt. servant,

"Mr. Chas. H. Bartlett,

"JOHN S. CLARK."

"South Bend, Ind "

"AUBURN, N. Y., Dec. 20, 1895.

"Dear Sir:—

Yours of the 14th received. I find by reference to several old French maps that I have, notably those of D'Anville, that several different leagues are described, French, Spanish, etc., from which I select the following:—

French League, 3,000 paces, 2,500 Toises, 20 to a degree.	
League Marine, 2,850	" 20 to a degree.
League Commune, 2,000	" League du Post
League Canadian, 2,000	"
League in hours on the road, 1,500	"

"The French Toise or Fathom was 76.735 *English inches*, consequently the league common or League du Post was equal to 2.42219 English miles, and this was undoubtedly the league in common use and designated as the League Canadian.

"The present English standards of measure were established in the year 1439 and were: 1 English mile equals 826 Toises, 1760 yards, 5280 feet, consequently the Toise English or fathom was 77.707 *English inches*, a small fraction of an inch less than the French Toise; and this was the relative standard two hundred years ago. Previous to 1439, the English standards were as follows:—

English foot	equal to	13.22 inches.
" yard	"	39.66 "
" fathom	"	79.32 "
" chain	"	793.20 "
" furlong	"	7932.00 "
" mile	"	79320.00 in. or 6,610 ft.

"The common League of France was never 2,400 fathoms, Bougainville to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Very respectfully,

"Mr. Chas. H. Bartlett, "JOHN S. CLARK."
"South Bend, Ind."

TONTY'S LETTER.

Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale (1614-1754). — Mémoires publiés par Pierre Margry. — I. 581.

Relation written from Quebec, Nov. 14, 1684, by Henri de Tonty.—[First trip, 1679.]

. . . "He (LaSalle) sent me the order to turn back, and December 6 we took the route of the Illinois after having ascended the river of the Miamis about twenty-seven leagues [65½ miles], and having nobody who could guide us to find a portage which goes to the river of the Illinois. M. de LaSalle walked by land with the intention of finding me. Night came upon us and we took shelter; but M. de LaSalle, being entangled between a swamp and firm ground, was obliged to make the tour. Having seen a fire, he went to it, hoping to find some savages and get shelter with them. He cried out like a savage, but finding that no one answered him, he entered the brushwood where the aforesaid fire was. He found nobody, and it was surely the hut of a warrior who had been afraid of him. He lay down there with two fire-brands before him. Although it was very cold and even snowed, he joined me the next day. There arrived also a savage hunter of LaSalle's, who told us that the people whom I had left hunting were waiting for us at the portage, which was two leagues [4.85 miles] below us. The portage found and our people reassembled, that caused us great joy."

LA SALLE'S LETTER.

Lettres de Cavalier de LaSalle et correspondance relative à ses entreprises.—(In Margry's *Decouvertes*, etc., I, 125, 127.) [Second visit.]

Relation of the voyage of LaSalle from the 22d Aug., 1680, to the autumn of 1681.

"They stopped me, nevertheless, at Missillimakinak, for lack of provisions, and having secured some by means of brandy, I left there October 4. Winds and rain were so frequent that we could not reach the river of the Miamis until November 4. . . .

"Having ascended the river of the Miamis, we arrived at their village the 15th. There was nobody there. We went up a little higher, to the portage by which one goes to that of the Illinois, where we found their camp, whence they had gone eight or ten days before to follow the remainder of the Illinois, of whose defeat by the Iroquois they had learned. The 17th, having made the portage, which is two leagues [4.85 miles] long when the waters are low, we arrived the 23d, by descending the river of Téakiki, at a place called la Fourche des Iroquois (the Fork of the Iroquois)." . . .

HENNEPIN'S LETTER.

Nouvelle Decouverte d'un Pays plus grands que l'Europe situé dans l'Amérique.—[By Louis Hennepin.]

Chapter XX. Embarkation at the Fort of the Miamis to go to the river of the Illinois. [First trip, 1679.]

"We embarked the third of December in eight boats, in number thirty men and three Recollet missionaries. We left the lake of the Illinois and went up the river of the Miamis, which we had already visited. We took our route to the southeast for about twenty-five leagues [$60\frac{1}{2}$ miles], and could not discover the portage which we ought to make with our boats and all the equipage to go and embark at the source of the river of the Illinois. . . .

"We had then gone up with our boats too far into this river of the Miamis without discovering the place where we ought to go by land to take the source of this river which flows to the Illinois. . . .

"The next day I put myself with two of our men into a light boat to make more speed in searching for it by reascending the river; but we did not find it. . . .

"Our savage had remained behind to hunt. Not finding us at the portage, which we had passed, he went up higher and came to tell us we must descend the river. . .

"The next day we joined our people at the portage, where Father Gabriel had made several crosses on the trees to make us recognize it more readily. . . .

"This place is situated on the border of a large field, at the extremity of which, on the west side, there is a village of Miamis, Mascouteins and Oiatinons gathered together. The river of the Illinois has its source in this place in a field in the midst of much shaking earth, on which one can scarcely walk. The source of this river is only a league and a half [$3.63\frac{1}{2}$ miles] from that of the Miamis; so we transported all our equipage with our boats by a road that we made for the accommodation of those who should come after us."

DANIEL COXE'S LETTER.

A Description of the English Province of Carolana, etc., by Daniel Coxe. (In French's Historical Collections of Louisiana.)

. . . . "Near the bottom of the bay, on the east side, is the fair river of the Miamihas (so called because upon it lives part of a nation bearing the same name), which in its passage comes within two leagues of the great easterly branch of the river of the Allinouecks, and its springs are very near the heads of some rivers which enter the Ouabachi."

CHARLEVOIX'S LETTER.

Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale: Addressé à Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiguières. Par C. P. de Charlevoix.—Tom. VI., pp. 103-105.

Twenty-sixth Letter.

"On the source of the Theakiki,
the 17th of September, 1721.

"Madam:—

I did not expect to take my pen again so soon to write to you; but my guides have just broken their boat, and here I am, delayed for a whole day in a place where I find nothing to excite the curiosity of a traveler; so I have nothing better to do than to yield myself to the pleasure of talking with you.

"I believe I made you understand in my last that I had two routes to choose between for reaching the Illinois: the first was to return to Lake Michigan, to follow along its southern coast and to enter the little river of Chicagou. After having ascended it five or six leagues, one passes into that of the Illinois by means of two portages, the longer of which is only five quarter leagues [3 miles]; but as this river is, however, only a brook at this place, I was warned that at this season I should not find in it enough water for my boat; therefore, I took the other

route, which, indeed, has also its inconveniences, and is not nearly as agreeable; but it is surer.

"I left yesterday the Fort of St. Joseph river, and I ascended this river about six leagues [$14\frac{1}{2}$ miles]. I disembarked on the right, walked five quarter leagues [3 miles], first following the edge of the water, then across the fields into a great prairie all sprinkled with little tufts of woodland, which have a very beautiful effect; it is called *la Prairie de la Tête de Bœuf* (Ox Head's Prairie), because there was found there, so they say, an ox's head which was monstrous in size. Why may there not have been giants among these animals also? I encamped in an extremely beautiful place called *le Fort des Renards* (Foxes Fort), because the Foxes, the Outagamis, had there, not long ago, a village fortified in their way.

"This morning I went a league [2.42 miles] farther into the prairie, my feet almost constantly in water, then I found a sort of pond, which communicates with several others of different sizes, the largest of which is only a hundred paces in circuit. These are the sources of a river called the Theakiki, which by corruption our Canadians name Kiakiki. Theak means a wolf, I no longer recall in what language, but this river bears that name because the Mahingans, who are also called the Wolves, formerly took refuge there.

"We put our boat, which two men had carried up to this point, into the second of these sources, and we embarked: but we had scarcely enough water to keep afloat. Ten men would make in two days a straight and navigable canal, which would save much trouble, and ten or twelve leagues of road; for the river at its issue from its source is so narrow, and it is necessary continually to turn so sharply, that at each instant one is in danger of breaking his boat, as has just happened to us."

MARQUETTE'S LAST JOURNEY.

It has been disputed that LaSalle was the first of the discoverers to visit the St. Joseph-Kankakee portage. The honor has been claimed for Marquette, solely on the ground that the historian Shea states that Marquette on his last journey, "*seems* to have taken the way by the St. Joseph river." But Dr. Shea does not give any authority for his supposition, nor could he supply such evidence.

Mr. R. G. Thwaites, of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, translator and editor of the "Jesuit Relations," now being issued in thirty or more volumes, says, in a letter to the writer April 26th, 1897, "Marquette, upon his last journey, undoubtedly returned north by way of the Illinois-Chicago portage."

Mr. Thwaites is the highest authority in the world on all historical matters pertaining to the early Jesuit missionaries. We are not surprised that he should declare himself as above, for Father Dablon, in his "Relation," on the death of Marquette, referring to the latter's return journey, says that "he was obliged to take the southern side of the lake, having gone thither by the northern." And Charlevoix's Journal, in the description of the spot where Marquette died, declares that he came to the place "from Chicagou." Father Allouez has told us that the Illinois Indians helped Marquette to reach the lake; and if, as Charlevoix states, he came to the lake at Chicago, we may rest assured that they did not take him back again over the Chicago portage and down the Desplaines to the mouth of the Kankakee, from which they had just brought him. Having once reached the stream and place called Chicago, it is all but impossible that a sick man in his condition should have turned back over his course to come around by these unknown rivers, the Kankakee and the St. Joseph. As Charlevoix has stated, he started on his last journey "from Chicagou," and proceeded, as Dablon has told us, "by the southern side of the lake."

THE PORTAGE ON THE MAP.

If one will measure the distance from point B on the map herewith to any point at the south or the east margin of Chess' Island, and will then lay off an equal distance due west, he will observe that the distance to Chess' Island exceeds that to the head of Chain Lakes by more than a mile. And if the same person will turn to the map on page 20 of Mr. George A. Baker's pamphlet on the St. Joseph-Kankakee portage, and will measure from the angle in Charlevoix's path to the landing place on the Kankakee as indicated by Mr. Baker, and will then lay off an equal distance in the direction of Chain Lakes, this distance will be found to reach far beyond the lakes themselves. Mr. Baker's map itself thus makes it plain that the distance to the Charlevoix ponds at the head of Chain Lakes is truly *the shortest distance* between the St. Joseph and the accessible waters of the Kankakee. When men carried boats on their shoulders, they sought the shortest distance. When they could avail themselves of horses and wagons, they would not hesitate to follow the line of any of the modern portages of which the early settlers so often speak.

In this same map, in order to cut down this excess of distance, Mr. Baker ignores Parkman's statement that Charlevoix has described LaSalle's path, and boldly defines the latter as one entirely separate and distinct. As will be seen, he allows LaSalle to take advantage of the hypotenuse of the triangle. But here another difficulty is encountered, for this hypotenuse lies through the midst of the forest all the way, and much of this forest is still standing, notably the Jackson woods. But we know that LaSalle did not go into the woods. The fact is plainly shown in the letters herewith that both Charlevoix and LaSalle's party went into and across the prairie and found the Kankakee waters *on the west side*.

EXPLANATION OF MAP.

A—The landing at the St. Joseph end of portage path.

B—Probable site of the Miami Treaty.

C—Spot marked by Mr. Brookfield, where section line crossed an old road. The road was the old Crumstown trail.

D—Location of five mounds.

E—One of the spots where remains of signal fires are abundant.

The Dragoon Trace is the road over which the soldiers at Fort Wayne were accustomed to pass in their journeys to Chicago during the early part of this century. The strip of it shown on the map may have been approximately the route taken by LaSalle when he was compelled "to make the detour" of the marsh in order that he might come again to the St. Joseph.

